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UNITED STATES

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UNITED STATES

AN 350

29 JAN 1947

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Registry Number AN 350/35~~9~~/~~2~~/45/~~G~~

FROM Lord Inverchapel Washington.

No. P.L. 166

Dated 22nd January, 1947.

Received in Registry 28th January, 1947.

Strategic Importance of Middle East to United States.

Transmits paper by C.V. Engert, Acting Diplomatic Adviser, U.N.R.R.A. on above.

Last Paper.

~~AN364~~ (AN252/1/45)

References.

(Print.)

(How disposed of.)

(Minutes.)

This paper was written by a member of the U.S. Foreign Service for the State Dept, who entirely approved and ~~showed~~ sent it to the White House. It is "Top Secret". (See tel no 369, para 3, AN 252/1/45

Mr Engert's theme is that, in face of the threat of aggression by Russia, the U.S. and ~~the~~ Britain should work for complete harmony on M.E. problems, and for agreement on military strategy in that area, and should strive together to win the confidence of the Middle Eastern countries.

Gen Jacob's secretary (B.B.C. – F.O. switchboard, Ext 313) telephoned this morning to ask for a copy of the paper refered to in para 3 of tel. no 369 from Washington (i.e. this paper). AN Div. confirmed that it had arrived, ~~but~~ and the B.B.C. asked for a copy urgently.

Mr.

27437 F.O.P.

(Action completed.)

(Index.)

Next Paper.

AN 346

Mr Bradley has suggested that Gen Jacob may have asked for a copy of the paper as a result of information he has picked up on the Russia Committee, and that Mr Butler might like to speak to Mr Kirkpatrick about his request.

D.A. LOGAN
31/1

Eastern Dept
~~R.M.A.D.~~ 13/2.
Northern Dept
Egyptian Dept.

This paper should, I think, be secreted green - there is no indication on the P/L that the enclosure is top secret.

Subject to Mr Butler's views, I should have thought that we should not send a copy to Gen. Jacob, although he might perhaps be invited to call & read it. We have obviously received it in strict confidence from Mr Engert, & it would be a great deal I know if a leakage occurred.

Perhaps S.L. Dept. may feel that it should have a wider distribution outside the office - by service depts.

S.L. Dept. List.

1/2

Mr. Engert probably knows more about the Middle East than any other member of the American Foreign Service. Personally he is rather unimpressive and, since 1915, when he was at the U.S. Embassy in Constantinople, he has been so well known an Anglophil that his opinions are a little discounted in Washington, nevertheless he is recognised as an expert, and it is a great advantage to have him there rather than Mr. Wallace Murray who ruled so long over the

Eastern ....

Eastern Division of the State Department.

I am not sure that Mr.Engert's pleading that the United States is vitally interested in the Middle East would read convincingly to Americans except on the assumption that Soviet Russia was the potential disturber of world peace. This assumption is at present widely accepted, but if the Bear is changing its tactics and learning to coo, American suspicions may gradually dissolve, and it may be difficult to get Congress to endorse in the various necessary ways American interest in those distant areas. The present is therefore a favourable time for coming to any strategic or political arrangements that may seem advantageous from our point of view.

I agree that we ought probably not to give a copy of this paper to the B.B.C., and I will speak to General Jacob; but the Embassy have sent us spare copies so they are probably not averse from its being given some very confidential distribution.

Read today by Sir I. Jacob.
MB.
13/2.

M Butler

Eastern Dept.- first. 4th February, 1947.

an interesting paper.
~~Sir R Stone~~ may like to see
7/2

This is an admirable paper for an American to have written. It might have been composed in the F.O.

R V.d
10/2

It would be useful if copies could be sent to the Director of Intelligence & the Director of Plans at the three Service Ministries, perhaps under

a cover explaining Mr. Engat's
present post in (what is it?)
+ the reasons why his views
need to slightly discarded
(see Mr. Butler's minute)

15/2

No. P.L.166

AN 4

HIS Majesty's Ambassador at Washington presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the undermentioned documents.

AN 359

British Embassy
Washington, D. C.

....January 22nd 1947

Reference to previous correspondence:

AN 252/1/45

Our telegram No. 369 of January 20th 1947

Description of Enclosure.

Name and Date.	Subject.
Paper by C.V. Engert Acting Diplomatic Adviser, UNRRA	Some observations on the strategic importance of the Middle East to the United States.

TOP SECRET

5

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

OF THE MIDDLE EAST TO THE UNITED STATES

During a recent Mission for UNRRA to the Middle East which took me to Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Persia, Syria and Lebanon, I was impressed by the great strategic importance of the entire area. Although I had served in practically all of these countries, I had never passed from one to the other within a short period and had therefore never before seen the Middle East as a whole.

The following conclusions are based on personal observations and on conversations with leading statesmen of the various nations, as well as British diplomats and military authorities - both in the Middle East and in London.

1. The Middle East, for the purposes of these notes, comprises the region between the Bosphorus and the Indus in one direction, and between the Caspian Sea and the Sudan in the other. Although composed of a number of different states with a variety of races and languages, its 60 million peoples are overwhelmingly Mohamedan and it thus forms the heart of the Mohamedan world. This gives its inhabitants a certain cultural unity, despite the fact that with the disappearance of the Caliphate even the former tenuous political unity of Islam ceased to exist. The fact that the Middle East contains the principal religious shrines of both Sunni and Shiah Moslems causes it to exercise considerable influence in other parts of the world (e.g., India, Morocco, the Dutch East Indies, Russian Central Asia). Therefore the control of these religious centers is still of great importance to the world. The Germans have always realized it and used to concentrate some of their most intensive propaganda campaigns on them.

2. It is generally recognized that Germany lost both world wars chiefly because she failed to capture the Middle East, for quite apart from its significance as the geographical center of Islam, the Middle East is of immense strategic importance because

(a) by the inexorable facts of geography it forms the historic crossroads of three continents (Europe, Asia, and Africa);

(b) it controls the shortest sea route from Europe to the Far East via Suez and the Red Sea;

(c) through the straits of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles it dominates the Aegean Islands and the Eastern Mediterranean;

(d) the overland railways from Istanbul to Cairo and Baghdad, and from the Caspian to the Persian Gulf are extremely important arteries of trade and military communications;

(e) large airports have been, or can easily be,

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established at all nodal points necessary for the principal air routes from Europe to Asia and Africa;

(f) it has natural resources (e.g., oil, chrome, cotton, etc.) of great value in world economy.

3. Up to the time of the second World War the Middle East had, for the above reasons, been considered primarily the concern of Great Britain and the Empire, but with the development of air traffic and the need for certain essential products it has become the concern of the whole world, including the United States. For a century and a half the British have considered it vital that no hostile power should be allowed to entrench itself on the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean and other parts of the Middle East, and they have stoutly and successfully defended this region against the ambitions of France, Germany, and Italy. Now that the main routes of international communications have become of interest to all countries, and considering that the Middle East contains many focal points for such communications, the United States should - like Great Britain - treat it as a strategic key area.

4. Our interest in safeguarding this area happens to coincide today with that of the British in that we can no longer permit any single great power to close the Middle East to the free traffic of the world and we must insist that it be preserved for the benefit of all nations. Our interests have become oceanic as well as continental, and the development of air power and of possible future weapons have made us today more vulnerable to attack than at any previous time in our history.

5. The fundamental basis of the defense of the United States must, of course, be the security of the Western Hemisphere and of our communications in the Atlantic and the Pacific. But today swift action is necessary to protect ourselves from an aggressor who may be proceeding with ruthless speed. It is therefore no longer possible for us to disinterest ourselves entirely from any point of outstanding strategic strength and importance. This inevitably greatly enlarges the area in which our "vital interests" can be threatened, and the Middle East is obviously one of them. For if there should be another war the control of the Middle East will have to be a basic item in our strategy.

6. The reasons why the Middle East must be defended by us and our potential allies at all costs in a new war are the following:

(a) We must act with speed and effectiveness if we are to place ourselves in the most favorable position to meet a threat to our continental defenses and to safe communications between ourselves and our allies. Certain bases far from our mainland have become indispensable. We cannot afford to permit an enemy to develop and concentrate without hindrance his entire manpower in parts of the world from which he can then menace our security.

(b) Long-range air power has eliminated most of the

old natural barriers and has, as stated above, put the Middle East in the center of air communications to and from three continents. It can provide defense in depth for East, West, and even South Africa. The importance of the trans-African land and air routes to the United States has already been amply demonstrated. They are needed for the protection of the west coast of Africa and thus of our communications in the South Atlantic.

(c) The Middle East would be necessary to secure for us freedom for our military preparations, movements, and operations. We and our allies would have to locate there certain essential stocks and administrative facilities which would be fairly secure against land attack - except possibly by relatively small forces with which we could cope.

(d) The oil reserves in Persia, Iraq, Bahrein, Kuweit, and Saudi Arabia are among the richest in the world. The United States is not only directly interested in them because of actual holdings in Bahrein and Saudi Arabia, but also because without the Middle East oilfields we would have to supply vastly more oil in a future war from our own reserves than was the case in the last two world wars. In fact, our and Great Britain's dependence on this oil in an emergency has become so great that we should even investigate the possibility of establishing refineries in less vulnerable parts of the Middle East than where they are now located.

(e) The control of the Middle East and its resources may give us and our allies precisely the necessary narrow margin of superiority required to defeat an enemy.

7. If Russia should decline to cooperate with us and Great Britain in making the United Nations a success, a realistic view of world affairs demands that she be regarded as a potential aggressor. In that case the whole of the Middle East at once assumes immense strategic importance. My recent observations there confirm the conviction I formed when I was in Afghanistan (1942-1945) that Russia's diplomatic objectives include the domination of the Middle East. After ill-treating their own Mohamedan subjects in Central Asia the Soviets suddenly reversed their policy a few years ago, restored to them much of their former religious freedom, and deliberately encouraged them to establish contacts with the Arabs. Russia has not forgotten the lessons of the last two wars and will undoubtedly try to succeed where Germany failed - viz., to secure control of the Middle East.

8. That the Soviet Union is bent on expanding her political power by acquiring territory or controlling resources among her neighbors (or both) is only too evident everywhere. In the Middle East it takes the form of widespread Soviet propaganda through the press, the radio, and local agents. This propaganda is aimed at controlling public opinion and often consists of open incitement of the peoples against Great Britain and the United States. She obviously wants a form of her own political creed to be accepted

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in these regions and is taking advantage of every opportunity (e.g., the Palestine question, Egyptian nationalism, etc.) to foster hatred of the West.

9. By capturing the Middle East the Russians might well obtain the strategic and economic margin already referred to which holds the balance between victory and defeat. The whole area is therefore destined to play a most vital role in our and Britain's relations with the Soviets. Russian superiority in manpower is so great that we (i.e., the United States and Great Britain) must make the maximum use of such technical and scientific superiority as we may still possess to prevent the disruption of our communications. But in order to do so our air bases in the Western Hemisphere and in the Pacific are no longer sufficient. We must put ourselves in a position from which we can strike back, and strike back at the enemy's vital centers.

10. Now the Middle Eastern bloc of states forms Russia's most vulnerable flank and she must be prevented from making it secure against attack. In other words, the Western Powers are interested in the whole area not only to keep the enemy out of the bases from which he could interfere with our communications and oil resources, but because it constitutes virtually the only part of the world from which an effective offensive action could be launched against the important oil producing and industrial zones in the Caucasus and South Russia. By thus destroying some of Russia's war potential we could slow up her war effort, and even if she were tempted to invade the Middle East she would soon be fighting at the end of long and difficult lines of communications which would impede her embarking on large scale offensive operations on land in the direction of the Mediterranean or North Africa. The constant invention of new weapons demands much more elbow room to develop an offensive than ever before, and the Middle East is ideally situated to provide the necessary air cover for thrusts in several directions.

11. Assuming then, for the sake of argument, that Soviet Russia refuses to participate in the maintenance of world peace except on her own terms, and that she thus becomes the only potentially hostile great power with whom we may have to deal, certain practical steps suggest themselves which may avert the danger altogether, or at least find us in a favorable position when the emergency is upon us. I submit that careful preparations in three directions are necessary to accomplish this:

(a) The United States and Great Britain being equally interested in preventing aggression, in preserving democratic institutions, and in safe access to raw materials, we should seek unobtrusively as complete harmony as possible between American and British military, political, and economic needs, and prepare for a joint and constructive treatment of all problems. If an effective international security system is set up such an understanding would of course come within its framework and would only serve to strengthen its authority and efficacy. But without Russia's good will circumstances

/may

may force us to associate ourselves with and support a so-called Western Group of like-minded powers, and to mobilize world opinion behind our policy. This will require a positive and even bold leadership based on Anglo-Saxon traditions and on American ideals. Nothing would strengthen the cause of peace and stability more than evidence that the relationships between the United States and Great Britain (and the Dominions, of course) had been coordinated, and that the more serious forms of rivalry and discord had been eliminated.

(b) As our future policy may have to include in its calculations the use of naval and air bases in the Middle East we should examine what forces might be necessary to defend and hold them as well as the oil fields. They can undoubtedly be held by Great Britain and the United States, but probably no longer by one alone. It might therefore be prudent to take advantage of the continued presence in Washington of the British Joint Staff Mission (Offices of the Combined Chiefs of Staff) to engage quietly and informally in conversations with a view to elaborating a strategic working agreement for use in an emergency. Such arrangements would logically contemplate active cooperation at all points where British and American interests are identical, or at least where they are exposed to the same dangers. This would of course necessitate our assuming similar military responsibilities in the Middle East to those we undertook so successfully during the second World War. The intelligent use of our armed forces may, in the event that they have to be used at all, reduce to relatively narrow limits the points or area where actual physical control need later be exercised. But any present reluctance on our part to face the possibility that such forces may have to be used on short notice might be very costly. For whatever joint American and British forces might be necessary for the successful defense of the Middle East, they would doubtless be far smaller than those that would be required to oust Russia once the Middle East was in her hands, or even to prevent her from exploiting her position there.

(c) The third, and probably most difficult, preparatory action would be to gain the confidence of the governments and peoples of the Middle East. For if we are to avoid having to use more than a minimum amount of military force it will be of the greatest value to have local governments that are friendly disposed toward the United States and Great Britain. In other words, we shall want these countries to be willing partners when the time comes to provide adequate and cooperative defense for them against Russia. In the past, and outside of Turkey, the heterogeneous elements in the Middle East have usually reacted but feebly to an attack and their loyalties are even today divided and easily shaken. During both World Wars, having been stirred up by enemy lies, insinuations, subsidies, etc., they expressed on the whole little sympathy for the Allied cause; and yet not even Turkey in the first World War showed much

/enthusiasm

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enthusiasm for a German victory. The truth of the matter is that they are fundamentally suspicious of all great powers, but they are undoubtedly less suspicious of the United States and Great Britain than of Russia. Although at present one hears a good deal about anti-American and anti-British feeling because of the Palestine muddle, a great majority of the people have a sincere liking for the United States because we are supposed to be idealistic, efficient, and rich, and they admire the British because of their courage, tenacity, and integrity. If, therefore, our diplomacy could convince them that Anglo-American collaboration is to their own advantage it would make a deep impression upon them because they are already in the habit of looking upon our political advice as more disinterested than that of other powers.

12. Nor is it at all necessary that we should hint at any possible future military collaboration between the United States and Britain, or that such collaboration might be directed against a third power. All we need do now is to assure them of our genuinely friendly interest in their welfare and prosperity by stressing the following points:

(a) That their sovereign rights as independent nations will always be respected, and that in return we shall only expect loyal cooperation on their part in the general interest of the world.

[redacted]

of modern democracy in terms of good government and creative economic and social service, and of welfare. American educational institutions throughout the Middle East have already exercised considerable cultural influence in the right direction. If we are careful not to wound their pride and dignity we can by this means prepare the ground for an orderly and relatively contented Middle East whose peoples will be well-disposed toward the West and its security.

13. Even if the United Nations become the effective organization we hope they will, it is possible that the Middle East may be found to be a suitable sphere for a regional arrangement under the larger world security scheme. As pointed out earlier in this memorandum, considerations of geography, tradition, and religion have given the countries of the Middle East a certain unity. It may therefore be to their and our advantage that they should, as much as possible, act as a unit. Four of them, viz., Turkey, Persia, Iraq, and Afghanistan, are already members of a regional grouping, known as the Saadabad Pact powers, which was formed in 1937. To this could perhaps now be added the members of the Arab League, especially as Iraq already belongs to both. Such a bloc might at least be counted on to prevent aggression by one member state against another. It may also be useful in maintaining internal order, protecting communications, and consulting each other regarding all matters of joint interest, and especially defense against external aggression. Such a Middle Eastern bloc could play a very important role in the relations between East and West, provided it functioned under the aegis of the United States and Great Britain who should logically be furnishing (on behalf of the United Nations or independently) whatever money, military equipment, or technical skill might be needed.

14. The above observations are intended to show that the problems of the Middle East have become world problems which - if Russia keeps aloof - can be successfully solved only by the United States and Great Britain. Its great strategic keypoints and essential raw materials are of direct concern to the United States and must be defended in the interest of our security and that of the local states. If we permit the present anarchic and disintegrating tendencies to gain the upper hand the resulting situation will not only offer to the Soviet Union an excuse to intervene, but it will deprive us of the possibility of using the Middle East to redress the balance of manpower in the event of another war. The strategic aspects of the situation are plain: we need the Middle East for our own security and also to prevent an enemy (e.g., Russia) from using it to cover his southern flank and to reduce our potential ally (e.g., Great Britain) by means of air power, while driving our and our ally's air bases beyond a range which could interfere with an enemy offensive. And as it is equally clear that none of the countries of the Middle East could alone assume the burden of protecting their territories and the international communications passing through them, the British and ourselves will have to assume the necessary responsibilities. The precise extent and form of these

/responsibilities

responsibilities should be at least tentatively defined as soon as possible, for later on there may not be time for lengthy deliberations.

15. In conclusion I should like to reiterate that the United States cannot afford to let Russia acquire a predominant position in the Middle East, for if we do we shall find that the principles and ideals of Western civilization will be supplanted by Soviet ideologies and methods, and the local nationalist agitations will invariably be directed only against the West. But the Middle East can still be saved by some international (or purely Anglo-American) arrangements on a cooperative basis which proclaims the fundamental human freedoms and reconciles the rights of small nations with the international character of peace and security. This will admittedly require the utmost integrity and good faith on the part of both the United States and Great Britain, but above all tact and diplomacy of a very high order.

Cornelius Van H. Engert
Acting Diplomatic Adviser, UNRRA

Washington, D.C.
September 26, 1946.

Registry
No.
AN 350/G

Secret.

Lt. Col. Gladell,
Dy/Dir. Central Pics

Major-Gen.
Sir Francis de
GUINGAND, K.B.E.,
C.B., D.S.O.
Director of
Military Intelligence
War Office.

2/ Captain E.G.N.
Rushbrooke, C.B.E., D.S.C., R.N.
D.N.I. Admiralty

3/ Air-Commodore
L.E. de T. VENTRAS,
Dir: of Intelligence
Air Ministry

from M: Hayter

M: Hayter
first.

Copys:
1/ To Director of Plans W.O.
2/ do: Admiralty
3/ do: Air Ministry

25/c

3 L 25m 13

I enclose a copy of an ~~you may care to see~~ paper on the ~~enclosed paper on the~~ strategic importance of the Middle East to the United States, which was written by M: C.V. Engert, a former U.S. ~~Ambassador~~ Minister to Afghanistan and was Acting Diplomatic Adviser to U.N.N.R.A, largely as a result of material made available to him by our Embassy in Washington. We are told that the State Dept. entirely approved it & submitted it to President Truman.

M: Engert has served in the Middle East for many years & clearly knows his territory. His only disadvantage is that he is so markedly pro-British that his expert views tend to be discounted by the State Dept.

~~I am sending a~~ ~~copy of this~~ letter to the other Directors of Intelligence & to the Deputy Dir. of Plans and to the ~~other Service~~ Departments.

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I am sending a similar letter to the other Directors of Intelligence and a copy of the correspondence to the Director of Plans

I shall be grateful if you will circulate this paper to the other members of the Cttee. Please also give copies to the Director of Plans

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END

FOREIGN OFFICE, S. W. 1.

25th February, 1947.

(AN 350/350/G)
SECRET

I enclose a copy of a paper on the strategic importance of the Middle East to the United States, which was written by Mr. C. V. Engert, a former United States Minister to Afghanistan and now Acting Diplomatic Adviser to U.N.R.R.A., largely as a result of material made available to him by our Embassy at Washington. We are told that the State Department entirely approved it and submitted it to President Truman.

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Lieutenant-Colonel
P. Gleadell, D.S.O.
Cabinet Offices.